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THREE BALD EAGLE NESTS ON A MINNESOTA TRANSMISSION LINE

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Although the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetus*) and Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) commonly nest on transmission line structures, the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) has not been reported to nest on power poles. Recently, however, several Bald Eagle nests on transmission lines have been documented. In 1987 Bald Eagles built a nest on a wooden H-frame structure in Florida (P. A. Quincy, Florida Power and Light Co., pers. comm.). This note presents information on one 1986 and two 1987 Bald Eagle nests on a Minnesota transmission line.

The nests occurred on a 250 kV direct current transmission line, although on structures of different design (Fig. 1). Each nest fledged two young, was between 21 m and 24 m from the ground and was within 1 km of a lake or river. All were in heavily wooded areas where there appeared to be an adequate supply of natural nest sites available. Two of the nests probably belonged to the same adult pair as they were less than 1 km apart and used alternately in 1986 and 1987. The pair nested on a structure in 1986 that was used by Ospreys in 1985, then moved to a structure in 1987 that was used by Ospreys in 1986. In 1986 the Osprey nest was active in late May, deserted by mid-June and, as mentioned, then used by eagles in 1987. No Ospreys nested near this pair of eagles in 1987. The third Bald Eagle nest, in 1987, was also situated on a structure used in 1985 and 1986 by Ospreys.

Transmission line nests were relatively small in comparison to the nests Bald Eagles build in trees in northern Minnesota. Although the powerline nests may have been smaller due to the absence of supporting branches, the eagles may simply have used old or remodeled Osprey nests. The nests rapidly deteriorated as the nesting season progressed. The young eagles, after fledging, continued to use the nests for perching and, by late summer, two of the three nests had completely fallen apart.

Bald Eagle use of transmission lines may become more common as young fledged from these nests, as well as from nests on other man-made platforms and towers, reach breeding age. An increasing Bald Eagle population, a lack of natural nest sites and a proliferation of transmission

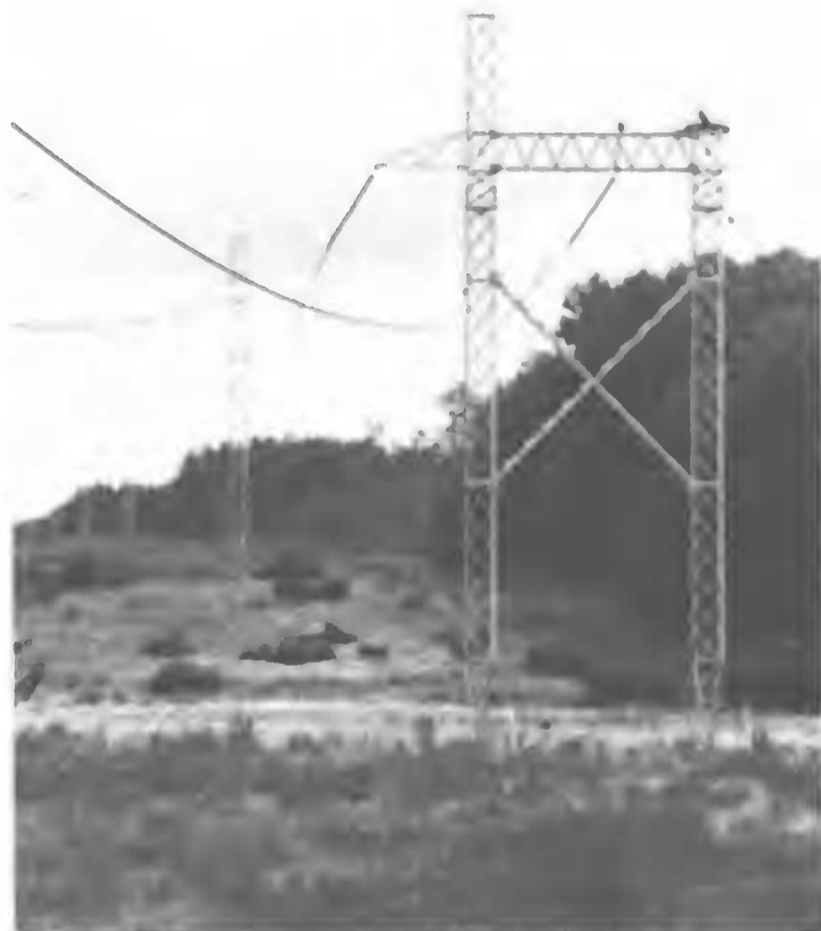


Figure 1. Immature Bald Eagles perching at their 1987 nest.

lines may interact to influence eagle use of powerlines in future years.

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